

Shelter Assistance

Mission

To establish a network among housing-related programs that includes emergency shelters, transitional housing facilities, rental housing, home ownership, heating/cooling assistance, and home conservation assistance; while providing basic or extended support services to assist families striving to become self-sufficient and to maintain adequate shelter.

Summary of Activities

The **Family and Social Services Administration** provides various shelter-related assistance programs to families and individuals. Housing assistance is available on several levels to assist families who are in a housing crisis, to prevent a crisis from developing, and to transition families into stable living circumstances.

On a crisis level, the Emergency Shelter Grant (ESG) Program provides services to families and individuals who do not have a fixed, regular, safe place to live, or who are in immediate danger of becoming homeless. Grants to homeless shelters support the maintenance and operation of facilities to provide basic shelter, as well as services pertaining to employment, health, education, permanent housing, childcare, and job training. ESG funds also serve to prevent homelessness with such assistance as security deposits, first month's rent, utility arrearages, and mediation programs for landlord-tenant disputes.

In some instances, a family may not be in crisis but may be in need of help with shelter expenses in order to prevent falling into a crisis situation. The Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Program (known as Section 8) provides rental assistance to very low income families and helps individuals maintain a safe and stable residence by paying a portion of the household rental expenses each month.

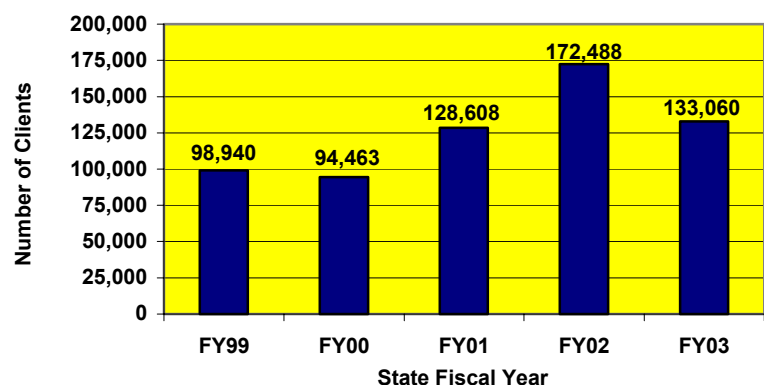
As a component of HCV services, the Family Self-Sufficiency Program utilizes public and private sector services and resources to help recipients of housing assistance achieve economic independence. By stabilizing housing and offering case management, this program permits families to invest their energy into other efforts, including education and job training necessary to achieve self-sufficiency. Participants in the program are provided with an opportunity to save for the future through an interest-bearing escrow account. After a family successfully completes the program, they can withdraw the balance to be used in any manner.

To further stabilize housing costs, the Energy Assistance Program provides utility assistance to low-income households to maintain utility service. In addition, portions of the funds are used to promote energy efficiency and conservation. Funds are allocated to home weatherization activities to eliminate energy waste. Also, energy education is a requirement for certain households to assure that the recipients of services take part in the energy conservation efforts. Maintenance of utility service leads to a more stable living environment, reduced energy costs, and the prevention of health problems related to loss of utility services.

External Factors

Several external factors impact the effectiveness of resources available for shelter assistance programs. There are inherent difficulties in obtaining a true picture of the homeless population in Indiana. Many of the families and individuals that could benefit from these programs seek housing assistance from family and friends. They are often unaware that agencies, facilities, and supportive services are available to assist them in becoming self-

**Clients Served through
Energy Assistance Programs**



sufficient. Most agencies that provide comprehensive services are located in urban areas leaving those families in rural counties few options when seeking assistance.

Increases in housing availability and costs are other external factors adding to the difficulty of providing services. Also, the energy assistance programs are also impacted by external factors including fluctuations in energy prices and extreme weather conditions.

Evaluation and Accomplishments

The array of shelter related programs has been designed to assist families and individuals at various degrees of stability in their living arrangements.

The Emergency Shelter Program provides a safety net for families who are literally without a place to live. Many shelters and other organizations continue to help those families with transitional services into a more stable living environment.

The Energy Assistance Program, for example, not only helped 127,000 households maintain utility service throughout the winter, but that assistance contributes to the stability of the family's living arrangements, which has an affect on everything from homelessness to school performance.

Likewise, the Section 8 and Weatherization programs have measures that assure that the family's dwelling is maintained at a level that is efficient and safe for family members.

Plans for the Biennium

In the next biennium, the shelter related programs will continue to establish the coordination of services to assure that low income families have safe, efficient, and affordable places to live.

